cheaper imports of raw materials as well as finished goods resulting to slump in consumption levels of farm forestry products;

(b) whether Government have received any request from the State Government of Punjab to help establishment of wood based paper mills/ pulp/board industries in Punjab and North-Western region of the country to boost farm forestry and help the poverty stricken families of the state; and

(c) action taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES (SHRI MAHAVIR PRASAD): (a) According to information furnished by the Government of Punjab, no small scale timber-based manufacturing unit in the rural areas of Punjab is reported to have closed down, due to cheaper imports of raw material of finished goods.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Government of India has forwarded the request of the State Government to Paper Industry Accociations and Trade Bodies to consider it while deciding the location of their new plants.

Improvement in infrasctructure in warehouses

*519. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:—

(a) whether standard of warehouses is poor in our country compared to other countries;

(b) whether 30-35 per cent of foodstuff purchased in our country goes waste due to poor and inadequate infrastructural facilities in warehouses; and

(c) if so, the steps taken to provide adequate infrastructural facilities in warehouses?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) No, Sir. The warehouses in our country are constructed and maintained as per prescribed standards, which have been evolved keeping in view the specific storage requirement and prevailing climatic condition etc.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Foodgrains procured in our country are stored in

such a way that storage losses are minimized to the extent possible. To this end, foodgrains are periodically inspected, pest control measures undertaken, prophylactic and curative steps taken, first in first out (FIFO) principle followed and godowns regularly repaired and maintained. Adequate infrastructure exists for the purpose.

Meningococcemia in Delhi

*520. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that national capital has been in the grip of meningococcemia, the killer disease;

(b) if so, the number of suspected cases tested positive for the disease till now by the National Institute of Communicable Diseases;

(c) the steps taken by Government to contain and prevent the disease spreading in other States;

(d) whether adequate quantity of medicines is available; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor and the steps taken to meet the requirement thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAM DOSS): (a) to (c) Meningococcal disease is an epidemic prone communicable disease and it shows cyclic spurt/rise in cases every 15-20 years. The number of cases of Meningococcal disease and deaths reported in Delhi during this year till date are 234 and 22 respectively. A total of 191 samples have tested positive out of 884 clinical samples tested by National Institute of Communicable Diseases during this year till now.

It is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments to prevent the disease and to provide the required facilities. Regular monitoring of the Meningococcemia disease is still being continued by the State Governments. MCD made notification of the disease mandatory. Efforts were made for early diagnosis and prompt treatment; contact tracking of the patients and providing chemoprophylaxis. IEC activities were carried out with the participation of the community. A control Room was set up at National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) to receive samples from hospitals and to monitor and review the situation. Technical guidelines to prevent and control meningococcal discare were circulated by NICD to